

HOW IS, INCIDENTALLY, THE NEW WORLD SHAPING UP?

sometimes i want to tell my daughters,

"i'd like you to read some books by jim harrison and thomas mc guane, cormac mc carthy, charles bowden, james crumley, maybe even philip roth. maybe then you'd have a better idea of what sort of life a young man led, and why, when i was a young man."

i know better than to bother suggesting ernest hemingway or norman mailer.

i know from those occasions when works of my own have fallen into their hands that the result has been, to put it mildly, counter-productive.

no books are going to help, though; nothing is going to help. for now, at least, they have been convinced that the life i and my friends lived was just plain and simple downright prima facie all wrong. we drank and smoked and gambled and ate steak and watched stag films and went to bullfights and got into fights and brought home the bacon (which they loved but have now learned was bad for them) and left the housework and children to the women and worst of all we were unfaithful, unremittingly and prolifically so, to our wives (their mothers) and our girlfriends.

and then some of us had the effrontery to write about it, in a far from apologetic manner.

and, of course, a lot of what they say is true. no point in explaining the exceptions, sometimes rather gaping ones. no point in linking many of the fights to honor, self-defense, defense of women and the weak. no point in analyzing the nutritional value of prime rib, baked potato salad, or that the women may have done a better job bringing up the kids than we did. no point in quietly discoursing upon ritual deaths in the dusty afternoons

or that in those days a man was not a man without a reasonably wide experience of women. no need to expect them to believe we ever felt guilt (although i'm not sure that we should have). no point in reminding them that our "other women" usually had husbands and boyfriends of their own. no point in alluding to fun, freedom, sociobiology.

no, no apologia for that man's world need expect a sympathetic hearing. not from our daughters; not now. their fathers, who doted upon them and whom they once idolized, are reduced to mug shots illustrating a sorry chapter in that dark pre-history before they and their mothers were allowed to have a man's life. the world of their fathers is to be ridiculed, vilified, expunged, extirpated, irreversibly reversed.

they cannot even allow themselves to remember how their fathers once loved them beyond all love, including that of self, and still do.

I AM NOT GERALD LOCKLIN

i have always hated the name "gerald." i used "gerald" when i was first writing because i thought a writer was supposed to use a formal name. i even, as only marvin malone and a handful of others remember, sometimes stooped to "gerald ivan locklin" to lend a spurious poeticism to my fledgling literary productions. today i still use "gerald i. locklin" on official documents because there are obviously so many "gerald locklins" running all over the place.

i was named after an uncle gerald who died young, before i was born, of tuberculosis. he was supposedly a very nice man, but, even aside from the consumption, i never wanted to be him. as a child i didn't even want to be "gerry": i was given that name in school. at home i was "jodie," a name i personally garbled for myself in the crib. presumably i did